

**THREE ART TEACHING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT LANGUAGE  
ACQUISITION AND COMMUNICATION SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

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**Abstract**

This study was designed to determine the impact of different approaches to art making on language acquisition and communication skill development in urban, public elementary school English Language Learners (ELLs) who speak a variety of languages. As determined by suggestions from studies previously conducted (Eubanks, 2002, Spina, 2006, Ingraham and Nuttall, 2016) and curricula (The New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies, 2010) intended to support language acquisition and communication skill development in ELLs, the author has chosen to study small group collaboration, large group collaboration, and choice based art making to determine the impact of best practices of three common art teaching strategies on three ELL students in her classroom. The author found all three strategies effective in supporting language acquisition and communication skill development in public, urban, elementary school ELLs.

*Keywords:* ELL, Language Acquisition, Communication Skill Development, Teaching Strategies, Art Teaching, Elementary Art, Urban Education, Public Education, Collaboration, Choice Based Art making

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## **Chapter I—Introduction**

### **Background to the Problem**

The topic of supporting English Language Learners (hereafter known as ELLs) in the elementary art classroom is largely uninvestigated. During my extensive literature review, I found less than six articles that specifically discuss this topic. There are many different ways of supporting language acquisition in ELLs, and I have only explored a few of them in this thesis. I acknowledge that many different teaching strategies exist for supporting ELLs in schools. Here, I have focused on three art-related teaching strategies. Each strategy was used with a different sixth grade class. I did this because my goal was to find an arts-based solution that works for different groups of ELLs as well as other groups of learners. I have tested out three solutions in this study. According to Bylund, Abrahamsson, & Hyltenstam (2012), teachers must use a variety of teaching techniques and strategies in order to increase comprehension for ELLs, to be certain that ELLs understand the materials and information presented to them. As mentioned, I have used three different teaching techniques specifically to determine which art teaching techniques are successful in supporting language acquisition and communication development in ELLs. In addition, this research addresses language acquisition in general. However, my instruction takes place in English, and as a result, this research will support English language acquisition as well.

### **Problem Statement**

My claim, that there are art-teaching techniques that are effective in supporting language acquisition and communication skill development in ELLs, is a practical one and I have tested my claim through action research in the classroom. Due to the

supportive and comfortable nature of the elementary art classroom, my claim is that collaborative art making processes promote language acquisition and communication skill development for ELLs. Although there are many articles and journals that recommend best practices in working with ELLs, there are not many that delve into art-specific teaching practices. While there are many ways to improve on communication skills, I find myself communicating more effectively with students who are Limited English Proficient (hereafter known as LEP) with the assistance of visuals, hands on experience and demonstrations. Often I conference with LEPs by demonstrating instructions with a dry erase board and non-verbally prompting them to respond with a drawing of their own. I picked up this practice from an art teacher I used to work with in an urban public elementary school in Phoenix, Arizona. At this school, most students were ELLs who spoke Spanish as their native language. While the population that I worked with during the course of my study speaks a variety of different languages, I continue to work with a high population of ELLs. As a result, this research will reach a larger audience and because of this, support a large number of students. Many visual symbols and images are universally recognized (i.e.: an image of a pumpkin will be recognized as such, regardless of an individual's native language), and expression through art making has allowed ELLs who have varying first languages to develop bonds. Many best practices for teaching ELLs and teaching art-making overlap, thus a marriage of the two is natural and practical. Eubanks (2002) references Garcia (1995) in recommending using cooperative learning strategies to foster functional communication in elementary-age students; organizing skills and content around themes; using informal, family-like settings in which the teacher works with small groups rather than focusing on

large group instruction in teaching elementary school art. In this scenario, the teacher can monitor and support appropriate discussion and conversation. While this exact scenario is unfortunately not possible in my classroom, I have adopted similar models for this research.

There are only a small handful of peer-reviewed articles and primary source documents that focus on supporting ELLs through art making. The research that does exist backs the idea that art making has the power to support strong language acquisition skills for ELLs and provide a comfortable space for those students to feel confident. Through this research, I hoped to find ways to teach where I was able to combine strategies that are best practices for ELLs and learning in the art classroom.

There are many different ways of supporting language acquisition in ELLs and this research explores three common art-based teaching strategies. Those strategies are small group collaboration, large group collaboration, and choice based art making. I recognize other strategies; however, due to time constraints within the scope of the research, I was only able to explore three strategies. My goal was to find an arts-based solution that works for different groups of ELLs. I tested out several solutions in hopes of finding at least one solution that worked for my students.

Through teaching, I work with hundreds of students each year with a wide range of different needs. Differentiating often comes naturally to me, but sometimes, when student needs are so varied, differentiating becomes a challenge. I am drawn to different languages and cultures, so I take these opportunities as learning moments for myself, where I try to educate myself about students' cultures as to better understand them and where they are coming from. The school where I taught during this study and continue to

teach, McCall School, has a strong history of supporting ELLs. In the 1990s, there was a bilingual Chinese program at McCall. In the 1950s, McCall School had a program for teaching English to non-native speakers. It was one of the first public schools in the nation to establish such a program. At McCall, I have students who speak various dialects of Chinese, Italian, Vietnamese, Spanish, in addition to 14 other languages!

**Research Question**

*With the above in mind, I ask the following research question:* Given that the School District of Philadelphia is a gateway for a consistently high rate of newly immigrated English Language Learners (ELL) to begin their immersion in a new country, and Eubanks (2002) suggests that the art classroom may be the first place in which ELL students feel comfortable and capable in school, what might be some best practices for art educators to use to support language acquisition and communication skill development success for ELL students in an urban elementary art classroom?

**Theoretical Framework**

The New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies (2010) stated,

Ultimately, educators and students themselves are the best testimony, and by listening to children's voices – written, verbal and visual, perhaps teachers and administrators will best witness the impact an integrated visual arts and ESL program can have on the education of young people. Students are directly influenced by their participation in arts education, and through continued research, outreach, advocacy, and examples of successful programs, curricula and outcomes, we may be able to generate the resources for and propel new programs



in schools that utilize the powers of the arts as a tool for teaching our students English as a second language. (p. 31)

The ELL population in the US has been rising over time, and, as mentioned previously, there is a surprisingly small amount of research on how to best support those students in the elementary art classroom. As the school that I teach at is part of the Philadelphia School District, I have also looked at data within my district. In the Philadelphia School District, there is a consistently high population of ELLs. As previously mentioned, there are only a small handful of peer-reviewed articles and primary source documents that focus on supporting ELLs through art making. The research that does exist backs the idea that art making has the power to support strong language acquisition skills for ELLs and provide a comfortable space for those students to feel confident. This thesis will explore that later. The goal for this research was to explore methods of teaching in a way that combines strategies that are best practices for ELLs and best practices for learning in the art classroom. My overarching goal was to empower students to strengthen their language and communication skills. I have completed this research at McCall School, a diverse public school in Philadelphia with a long history of ELL programs that maintain a strong presence in the school. In 2018, McCall students speak 19 different languages at home.

In my first year of teaching, I worked with many ELLs who were originally from Mexico. Another year, I taught at a bilingual school, where many of my ELLs were either from Philadelphia or Puerto Rico. That year, I encountered many students who were born in the neighborhood I taught, but they never needed to learn English because everyone at home and in their community spoke Spanish. That opened my eyes to some

major differences in cultural norms among different communities. As mentioned, McCall School has a strong history of supporting ELLs and our student population is very diverse, with students speaking 19 different languages, and growing up in even more varied cultural environments. With such a diverse group of ELLs at my current school, I found that I needed to change the way that I teach.

**Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to support ELLs using best practices in the elementary art classroom, given that Eubanks (2002) suggests that the art classroom may be the first place that immigrant students feel comfortable and capable in school and over time there are consistent populations of ELLs in the School District of Philadelphia and in Pennsylvania Public Schools as a whole.

As this research was conducted specifically to support ELLs through arts-based practices, it will benefit art educators, any educator who works with ELLs, the students of educators who read and apply this research to their own teaching practice, anyone interested in language development in ELLs, anyone interested in how arts-based instruction can support language development, students, my school community and myself. This research will support language and communication skill development in elementary school learners, because it has resulted in best practices that I have tested and determined outcomes for.

In practice, this study will determine which strategies are strongest in supporting the ELLs in my art classroom. I have used a combination of best practices for the art classroom and best practices for ELLs within the three art teaching methods that were chosen for the study. Some art teaching best practices that have been utilized in this

study include think-pair-share activities, student led, teacher led and teacher-facilitated discussions, art experimentation through centers, group and individual conferences and critiques. Some ESOL best practices that also support art teaching that have been utilized include peer assisted learning (group work, partner work, and think-pair-share activities); developing communication skills through listening, reading, speaking and writing, maintaining a positive classroom environment (listening, taking turns, showing respect, staying on task, and seeking others opinions); skill development (listening, reading, speaking and writing, as mentioned previously) taught through thematic units and all content areas; individual and group conferencing; centers; heterogeneous groupings of students; language support and teacher behaviors such as modeling, using non linguistic cues, giving verbal, written and visual instructions and encouraging bilingual literacy skills. There is significant overlap between art teaching best practices and best practices for ELLs, so I found many opportunities for student success. In combination, these best practices have supported the three teaching strategies that were used in this study: small group collaborations, large group collaborations, and choice based art making.

**Limitations of the Study**

I was aware of my personal biases and kept them in check throughout the research by informally conferencing with other art educators and ESOL teachers regarding findings. My sample was a very specific group of students in a very specific environment at the same school. As a result, findings may be different if I performed the same research in a different environment. Students may have also had specific biases. This also means that the results may not be generalized to “all ELLs” or even “all elementary school ELLs.” In addition, this research took place over the course of a few months. In

an ideal situation, I would perform this research over the course of the nine years that a group of ELLs attend McCall School, while the same research was performed in other school environments with different art educator/researchers facilitating.

I had personal biases due to my relationship to the school and the students. I only speak English and the research was with language learners who speak a variety of different languages. I instinctively use specific words when I teach. The language and specific words that I use are a part of my identity, and while being aware of this helps, I could not do much to change the fact that the language I used came from me as chief researcher. I may have not been able to remove some of my own biases and personal interpretations, and it is possible that I may have not been able to recognize this at the time. However, as mentioned, I checked in with myself throughout the research. I did this in order to see how much of the data was interpreted by me and how much of it was student or participant specified.

Another possible limitation was that students may not have shared valuable information with me or may not have thought of appropriate information to share at the time they were being interviewed.

I worked with a specific group of learners in a specific setting, so the direction that best supported these students may not have been the direction that best supported learners at a different time, school, or setting. As much as I wish I could, I may not have been able to remove some of my own biases and personal interpretations, and it is possible that I may not have been able to recognize this at the time.

**Definition of Key Terms**

Major topic areas of the research include language acquisition for English Language Learners, collaborative art making, best practices for teaching art to elementary school students, and best practices for teaching ELLs, urban ELLs, and public school ELLs. I will now go into detail defining these specific topic areas.

**ELL.** ELL is an abbreviation for English Language Learner. According to the National Council of Teachers (2008), an ELL is “an active learner of the English language who may benefit from various types of language support programs. This term is used mainly in the U.S. to describe K–12 students” (p. 2).

**ESOL.** According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (2017) document on educating English language learners, ESOL is also known as English language development instruction, and is otherwise defined as “English as a second language, delivered by a licensed ESL teacher is its own content area. ELD in this context is driven by language, but it draws from general education content as a vehicle for instruction in order to contextualize language learning.”

**LEP.** LEP is a term meaning “Limited English Proficiency” used by the U.S. Department of Education to refer to ELLs who are enrolled or getting ready to enroll in elementary or secondary school and who have an insufficient level of English to meet a state’s English expertise requirements. However, the expression *English language learner (ELL)* has started to replace *LEP* to avoid the implication that nonnative-English-speaking students are deficient (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008). The former term for LEP was *limited English speaking (LES)*, and was used in the first

authorization of the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII of ESEA, prior to NCLB), in 1968.

**ESL.** ESLs are defined by Bardack (2010) as English as a Second Language “students who are identified as ELLs who receive specially designed language and academic instruction in English for the entire school day, or some part of it, depending on the requirements of the state. Students who are more proficient tend to spend fewer hours with an ESL specialist. ESL programs may have several formats, which include ‘pullout’ or ‘push-in’ programs.”

**Accommodation.** Accommodation, according to Bardack (2010), is defined as “appropriate modifications or changes to tests and testing procedures so that ELL content knowledge is more accurately measured. Appropriate accommodations (e.g., allowing extra time to take a test, providing dictionaries, and making changes to materials, protocols, or the testing conditions) are used to facilitate the valid participation of ELLs in assessments without undermining the test construct.”

**Best practices.** These are generally defined as methods or techniques that are accepted as superior to others because the results produced are better than other methods or techniques. Typically these are proven by objective and comprehensive research and evaluation according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2003). Best Practices are sometimes also the standard way of doing things (IE: Best practice for cleaning a paintbrush that was used with watercolor paints is to wash it in the sink).

**Urban public school students.** As stated by the US Department of Education (1996), urban public school students “are more likely to have concentrations of less advantaged students, which in itself produces special problems (Hoffer, 1994). Research

suggests that such concentrations may lower the level of engagement, effort, and aspirations of all students (Ralph, 1990), and that some peer groups in inner cities may even develop an aversion to academic work and learning (Fordham and Ogbu, 1987). Other characteristics of urban schools besides the SES of their students are often identified as related to urban school problems and poorer student outcomes. For instance, because urban schools are likely to have fewer resources than suburban schools, school level achievement differences may reflect inequities in resources (Panel on High-Risk Youth, 1993; Orland, 1990). Researchers also suggest that the larger size and often burdensome centralized bureaucracy of urban schools can restrict the independence and collegial support among school staff and create a more impersonal environment for students (Hoffer, 1992; Glazer, 1992). Finally, it is perceived that violence and disruptions are more prevalent in urban schools. All of these location- specific school characteristics help to reinforce the view that a school's location can influence a student's likelihood of being undereducated" (Waggoner, 1991, p. 3).

**High needs students.** High needs students are defined by the US Department of Education (2017) as "Students at risk of educational failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, who attend high-minority schools (as defined in the Race to the Top application), who are far below grade level, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, who are at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who have been incarcerated, who have disabilities, or who are English learners."

**Choice-based art making.** This is an art teaching practice where students are given independence and autonomy over their learning. In this teaching method, short

demonstrations of techniques and materials are given at the start of art class, and students may choose to utilize those techniques or materials. Students may continue to work on something they started previously, or may begin a new work from their own ideas (Douglas, 2009).

**Collaborative art making.** There are different ways to teach collaborative art making. In the study, I have focused on small group collaborations and large group collaborations. Small group collaborations involve 3-5 students brainstorming, planning, problem solving and communicating to create works together. Large group collaborations involve the whole class as well as the teacher, and possibly a cross-curricular collaboration with another teacher, as well. Through collaborations, teachers may scaffold instruction, foster creativity, make learning relevant and meaningful, foster higher order thinking skills, support creative thinking and model problem solving, among other outcomes. Through collaborative art making, ELLs are able to build on prior knowledge, create a bridge between written and spoken language, and develop personal connections to content and collaborators (The New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies, 2010).

### **Assumptions To Be Debated**

- Given that many best practices for art making exist, the effectiveness of three specific best practices (large group collaboration, small group collaboration and choice based) in supporting urban ELLs in a public elementary school will be debated because some best practices are ineffective or less effective with urban ELLs in a public elementary school setting than they are with other populations in a different setting.



- Given that elementary art curricula are written with a general population of students in mind, the concept that ELLs and urban public school students are often not considered in elementary art curriculum will be debated because curriculum is typically geared towards regular education students who have assumed access to supplies, materials, and other visual art-related learning experiences.
- Given that many strategies used in working with ELLs in the art classroom are written with Spanish-speaking ELLs in mind, strategies that are effective in supporting language acquisition in urban public school ELLs who speak a variety of languages will be debated because some strategies meant to help language learners are less effective when teaching a classroom of students who speak multiple languages.

**Assumptions Not To Be Debated**

- Given that in teaching, tactics, strategies and techniques are used in conjunction with each other, it is assumed that teaching tactics, teaching strategies and teaching techniques go hand in hand. Therefore, it will not be debated that the words tactics, strategies and techniques will be used throughout in this thesis to refer to the same topics.
- Given that art is understood universally, and sometimes referred to as a universal language, it is assumed that, while some people are unable to pick up or recognize social cues and gestures, most people over the age of 5 can generally recognize images such as a circle, a face, an image of an airplane, a series of patterns, etc. Therefore, it will not be debated that visual art is used as a tool for communicating with people who speak other languages.

- Given that my instructions and lessons are given in the English language, it is assumed that my instructions and lessons support verbal communication in the English language. Therefore, it will not be debated that this study will support English language acquisition in addition to language acquisition in general.
- Given that people of color, as well as urban and ELL populations (particularly when two or more of those groups are combined) are at a higher risk of being incarcerated or looked over for a job or promotion than other populations, Todd Clear (2007) states, and it is assumed that “imprisonment in America is concentrated among young, poor—dominantly minority—men and (to a lesser extent) women who come from impoverished communities” (p. 175). For this reason, it will not be debated that students of color, students in urban settings and ELLs in urban settings are at a higher risk of the results listed above and therefore are more crucial to support in an academic setting.
- Given that collaborative art making requires social interaction, it is assumed that when we collaboratively make art, we are building our communication skills. Therefore, it will not be debated that collaborative art making supports communication skill development.
- Given that there are not many resources tying communication skill development and language acquisition skills for ELLs to art making and the resources that do exist strongly support the link between the two, it is assumed that there is a need for these resources. Therefore, it will not be debated that there is a positive link between art making, communication skill development and language acquisition skills for ELLs.

- Given that I have been working with elementary school aged learners who speak different languages, have various needs, ability and skill levels in my art classroom for a number of years, it is assumed that I am able to make an assessment of what a diverse and inviting classroom looks like. Therefore, it will not be debated that my art class is diverse and inviting to all students.
- Given that there are many strategies for supporting language acquisition in ELLs, it is assumed that there is not one strategy that is always the most effective. Therefore, the best strategy or strategies for supporting language acquisition in ELLs and the author's decision to focus on the three specific strategies chosen for this study will not be debated.

**Summary**

Art educators have been supporting ELLs in the art classroom for a long time. Typically, content and teaching strategies remain the same whether or not there are ELL populations in the classroom, according to interviews done by Eubanks (2002). There are not many teaching strategies that are specifically proven to support language acquisition and communication skill development in ELLs through art teaching practices. I hope to provide my reader with at least one example of an art teaching practice that supports language acquisition and communication skill development in ELLs.

## Chapter II—Review of the Literature

### Introduction

To prepare for this case study, different methods of supporting language acquisition and communication skill development for ELLs through art making were researched. *Art As a Tool for Teachers of English Language Learners* (2010), a curriculum put out by the New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies to support school age ELLs through art in public school settings will often be referenced in this chapter.

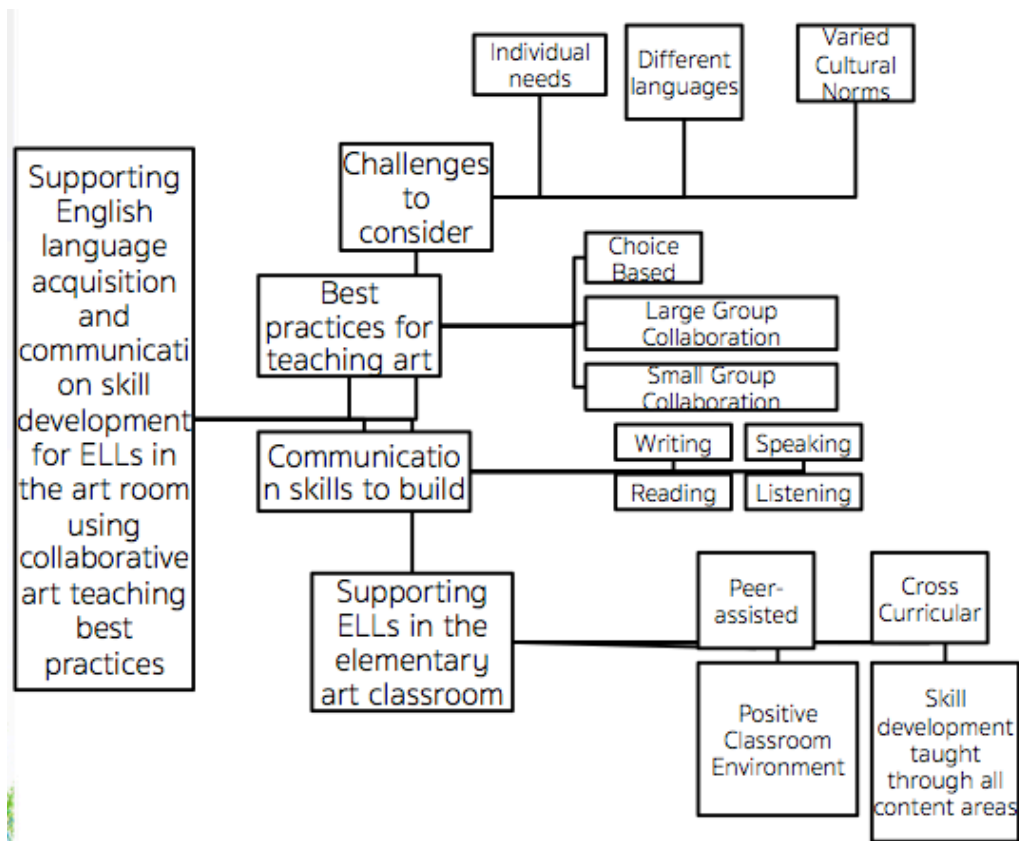


Figure 1. A literature review chart demonstrating how to support language acquisition and communication skill development in ELLs in the art room using collaborative art teaching best practices.

**Best practices for teaching art**

In the *Art As a Tool for Teachers of English Language Learners* curriculum, the New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies (2010) mentions cross-curricular studies and different kinds of art making collaborations as effective methods of supporting language acquisition and communication development skills in school age ELLs. The curriculum states:

The arts naturally lend themselves to multicultural and visual teaching and learning, which enhance LEP/ELLs access to language acquisition and cross-cultural education. It is highly effective to make cross-curricular connections in learning strategies and to use similar platforms of discovery in the ESL and visual art classroom as well as in other content areas. The cross-content area curriculum should be complementary and instructed at the same time so that the students' work revolves around the same theme and incorporates and reinforces the same vocabulary. (p. 15)

The curriculum referenced also gives an example of Project-Based Learning, which is similar to the choice based teaching technique that will be implemented in this study. This curriculum guide was looked at closely while planning out which teaching strategies will be implemented in this study, as it is the only recent state curriculum guide that could be found that ties English Language Learning to art teaching practices.

**Communication Skills and English Language Acquisition**

Regardless of which language a child is speaking, children are typically able to communicate with others by the time they begin kindergarten. According to Kerlavge (1998), Children have a vocabulary of around 14,000 words by the time they enter

kindergarten. Definitions and words are understood and recognized at this time and they are able to differentiate subtle differences in pronunciation and meaning. The New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies (2010) states, “Students can be motivated to use the four language skills in response to learning about, looking at and making art; and students should read, write, speak and listen in order to brainstorm, organize thinking and propel creations” (p. 15). The PA Standards for English Language Development (2017) also state those four skills as necessary communication skills for ELLs. Supporting the PA Standards for English Language Development, as mentioned, this study looks at listening and speaking-two of these four communication skills mentioned above. Basic language-acquisition understandings include the notion that the environment has a significant role in language development and acquisition (Ellis, 1997). Li (2013) conducted research that showed that ELL populations are rising more drastically than general school population growth. As a result, it is important that teachers have effective strategies when working with ELLs.

As previously stated, the goal for this study was to foster an environment that supports language acquisition and communication skill development. When communication skills are mentioned in this study, the focus is on a student’s ability to listen, as well as the words or lack of words they are using when communicating. Language acquisition is a skill set that will be looked at over time, which is why students completed a questionnaire at the beginning of the study, and again at the close of the study.

**Challenges to consider**

I can understand and speak a bit of Spanish. However, as much as I wished that I could, I could not quickly learn 19 languages or have as much knowledge as I wish I did regarding all of the different cultures that I found at my school. Working with ELLs who come from similar cultural backgrounds and mostly speak the same language is a very different experience from working with those who speak nineteen different languages and come from even more different cultural backgrounds. Many of the studies that I read spoke of elementary art classroom environments where most of the students primarily spoke Spanish. I did not find any art-based studies that studied ELLs who spoke primary languages other than Spanish. As a result, many strategies that speak of supporting ELLs in the elementary art classroom come from studies done with ELLs who primarily speak Spanish.

**Demographics of Students**

Over time, there have been more and more ELL students attending public schools in the US. From 2005-2015, there was a national increase of 350,000 ELL programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). That is just a preliminary number, as some states do not require documentation if there are under 20 students in a program. There are even more unreported programs. The number of ELL programs and students is increasing with no indication that there will be a decrease in the future. As there are 214 different languages spoken by ELLs in Pennsylvania, according to the PA State Department of Education (2013), hopefully this research will open the conversation that support for ELLs should include support for students who speak a primary language other

than Spanish. The primary language spoken by most ELLs at McCall School is Mandarin, which happens to be the second most prolific primary language spoken by ELLs in Pennsylvania, after Spanish. There are 1,983 ELLs in Pennsylvania who speak Mandarin (PA State Department of Education, 2013).

### **Supporting ELLs in the Art Classroom**

Eubanks' (2002) article looked to peer-reviewed research and reached out to urban art educators regarding the ways they support ELLs in their classrooms. The author wanted to determine what pedagogy and curriculum art educators were developing when working with ELL students, as she felt that these teachers were implementing useful strategies that would benefit all students and art educators, particularly teachers new to working with ELL students. The author touches on three overarching questions: What do teachers need to know to successfully work with ESOL students in the art room? Do art teachers need to change their pedagogy for ESOL students? Are art teachers teaching culturally appropriate and relevant lessons to English Language Learners? This article was generally useful for determining which strategies to use in this study, as many tested strategies were referenced. However, the educators referenced in Eubanks' research worked primarily with ELLs who spoke Spanish as their primary language. As previously mentioned, this study supported ELL students who speak a variety of primary languages.

The effectiveness of a number of art teaching techniques with ELLs will be surveyed in this study, as well. Eubanks' (2002) article delves into what researchers and experts had to say juxtaposed with the voices of art educators in the classroom who work with ELLs on a daily basis. In the future, I would like to hear from even larger group of



art educators who taught ELLs from different cultures and spoke a variety of different languages, to see if the strategies they find to be successful with their students are different from those used with primarily Spanish-speaking ELLs. The author stated her purpose clearly and outlined ideas backed up by research completed by different kinds of experts and countered by professionals. Her sources had opposing views, either backed by research or professional teaching practice. The variety in viewpoints gave cause for others to further her research. I find that in my teaching practice in working with ELLs, some of what I do is aligned with the experts, some is aligned with the practicing teachers that she interviewed, and some overlaps. For example, I often use peer tutoring in the classroom, especially with students who speak Chinese or another language that I am less familiar with. This study had a heavy focus on cooperative learning, and its results on communication skill development and language acquisition. As mentioned above, one teacher interviewed in the study conducted by Eubanks stated, “They make their projects together, and they kind of feed off one another, and I like that. It has a kind of a home feel to it” (Eubanks, 2002) about cooperative learning. Similarly, Garcia (1995) recommended using cooperative learning strategies that foster functional communication as well.

### **Gaps**

In researching for this study, two gaps that were especially apparent were found. There were no case studies found that specifically studied classrooms where students spoke a variety of languages or where language acquisition and communication skill development were supported by learning in the elementary art classroom. As previously mentioned in this chapter, the *PA Standards for English Language Development* (2017)

references listening and speaking as two crucial communication skills for ELLs, but does not reference developing these skills through visual arts learning. In addition, no case studies that compared different art teaching methods as a means of supporting ELLs in the urban, public elementary art room were found during the literature review for this study.

Of the case studies researched in preparation for this study, Ingraham and Nuttall's (2011) appeared to be similar to this case study to be completed at McCall School. They did not, however, study an art classroom. Instead, they studied effects of arts-integration on ELLs in an entire school. This was also another study where many ELLs spoke Spanish, and not a variety of languages. Ingraham and Nuttall (2011) studied the effects of arts-integration on ELLs. The collaborative aspect of their research was notable, as this research also included collaborative aspects.

Another study looked at was one conducted by Spina (2006). This was another study that was similar to this research, but Spina studied the topic from a different direction. She was interested in the research of the student experience in the art classroom and social interaction among students. In Spina's study, two ESL fifth grade classes were compared. One class was taught using an arts-based curriculum and the other was taught using more traditional ESL methods. Students took pre- and post- tests in their native language and in English to assess reading skills. Spina's study found significant cognitive advantages for ESL students with the arts-based curriculum. While Spina's study was similar to this one in that it looked at effects that visual arts education had on the student experience and social interaction in ELLs, it was different in that there was a comparison between two different classrooms. However, her findings compliment

the theory that drove this study, that visual arts instruction supports language acquisition and communication skill development in elementary school ELLs. This thesis hoped to address these gaps in the research through the case study and interviews with students.

**Summary**

As previously mentioned, three collaborative art teaching methods were chosen. The three art teaching methods that were chosen for this study were small group collaboration, large group collaboration and choice based art making. Resources that were looked at include documents that detail history of laws and in-school support for ELLs, a state curriculum guide for ELLs, a state curriculum guide for art teachers who work with ELLs, case studies of arts-based teaching techniques in urban, public elementary school environments, and interviews with urban, public elementary school art teachers who support ELLs. Resources that detail why collaborative art making and choice based art making are effective methods of teaching were also explored.

### Chapter III—Methodology

#### Design of the Study

**Setting.** Elementary school ELLs were studied at McCall School, a K-8 public school in the Philadelphia School District, in the 2017-2018 school year. McCall School has been a public school for 107 years (since 1911). For at least the past 65 years, McCall School has had programs in place for its steady ELL population. All study participants were sixth grade ELLs that attended McCall School. For this study, three students in the art room were studied through interviews, collaborative assignments, peer discussions, group discussions, and pre and post assessments to determine which best practices were most beneficial for those students. These students were familiar with the setting, and spend a good deal of time there. This setting provided an opportunity for close interaction because interviews and candid discussions with students happened in a natural educational environment, while students were working. This study took place in the art classroom, which is a large room in the basement of McCall School. There was a carpet area for younger students to sit at for group activities, there were six main tables for students to work at, and three smaller tables for students who needed to work by themselves. Art supplies that students may use were typically on a table in the center of the room, or in labeled drawers directly beneath the table.

**Participants.** The participants of this study were sixth grade students at McCall School. There were three sixth grade classes at McCall School. Each class had art once a week for 45 minutes. The 2017-2018 school year was my first year teaching at McCall School, so my relationship with these students was fairly new. In the Philadelphia School District, student populations tend to fluctuate drastically over time, so at the time of

writing this, the following information was true: Classes A and C have 24 students and class B has 25 students. Class A has 11 ELLs, class B has 10, and class C has 8. There are a few reasons that sixth grade was studied. One being that sixth grade class sizes were slightly smaller than other grades, and as a result, more time was spent checking in with students. In these three sixth grade classes, there were similar numbers of ELLs distributed throughout the classes, and the class sizes were similar. McCall students come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. I did not have access to specific data for individual students; however, the Philadelphia School District website for McCall School (2017) states that 16% of these sixth graders identified as African American, 4% identified as Latinx or Hispanic, 13% identified as White, 58% identified as Asian and 7% identified as mixed race. In addition, 11% of these sixth graders were students with special needs and 9% were ELLs. The Philadelphia School District website (2017) states that 79% of these students came from lower-income households and had families who meet the income eligibility guidelines for free lunch.

**Researcher Role.** I interacted with these students in a scheduled classroom environment, as their art teacher and as lead researcher in my art classroom. My role as lead researcher was to complete the study of my sixth grade students with as little influence of my bias as possible. I asked a lot of open-ended questions to press students further on topics related to the study. To ensure validity, I member checked to be sure that I understood students' intent to the best of my ability.

**Research Procedure.** As this study took place during art class, no special circumstances were necessary. Prior to the study, letters to parents/guardians of sixth grade students were sent home, briefly explaining the study, asking permission for

students to participate, letting parents know that student responses and interviews will remain anonymous. See appendix B for more details. Data was stored on a personal computer or in a locked file cabinet in the art classroom. All sixth grade students filled out a questionnaire. This was a blind questionnaire to avoid teacher bias. See appendix C for pre and post questionnaire. After completion of the questionnaire, all three classes were given the same scripted information about the study. At the beginning of the data collection period, the study was framed in a developmentally appropriate way to students as a focus on language acquisition.

I explained to students that when I speak about communication skills, I am referring to the ability to share messages simply and clearly, giving and receiving instructions effectively, asking meaningful, appropriate and supportive questions, and being able to interpret situations and adapt in appropriate ways. These skills translate into being able to learn new things, make compromises with others, and being empathetic to others. It is important to note that my lessons are designed with critical thinking and problem solving skill development in mind; however, I did not specifically look at or measure critical thinking, problem solving, social skills or emotional intelligence in this study. Students were told that we will continue to follow my art curriculum, all assignments and projects will be graded as normal, and the only thing that would be different is that I would check in with students specifically for feedback about their interest level in different kinds of art making and their perceptions on their communication skills. At the end of the unit, students completed the same questionnaire again and I compared results. As feedback and results were recorded confidentially, there was no risk of students being put on the spot or in jeopardy of being treated

differently by me or other students because of a particular answer. These precautions were taken to ensure that students who are ELLs were not feeling slighted or treated differently from other students.

**Ethical Considerations.** As previously mentioned, findings were not generalized to “all ELLs” or even “all elementary school ELLs.” It is important to note that I only speak English and this research was with language learners who spoke a variety of different languages. For this reason, clarity was crucial to the research. There were visual and written versions of directions available for students, as well as visual reminders of the standards and what materials we were using. Students had pre-set guidelines and rubrics in place, which helped me to keep myself in check about my biases and to ensure that expectations for students were consistent and understood. I reviewed the consent paperwork, as seen in Appendix B, with students prior to the study and allowed students to ask questions if they had any regarding the study. I outlined what participation in the study will entail, and reminded students that if videos, photos or writing referencing their work were included in this study, they would remain unnamed. All documentation was stored in either a password-protected folder on my computer or in a locked filing cabinet, returned to the student or deleted at the end of the study.

### **Research Methods**

Finding successful ways to support language acquisition and communication skill development in ELLs is ongoing for researchers. In America, there have always been ELLs who come into public schools speaking a variety of different languages for as long as there has been public education in this country. There are currently ELLs in public schools speaking a range of languages and there will continue to be ELLs who speak

different languages attending public schools. I researched the problem of best practices used to support ELLs as it effected populations in the past. Part of that research included interviewing a former teacher of ELLs who taught at McCall School in the 1960s. I did not include a transcript of that interview in this study as the information I acquired was useful background information but unfortunately could not be directly used for this study, as the retired teacher had not taught art. I also researched this problem as it affected current, at the time of this writing, populations through the case study in my art classroom with my sixth graders, as previously mentioned. Further details on the research that I did can be found in my literature review and further details on how I was able to support my sixth graders through this research can be found in chapters four and five of this study. I also took into consideration how this research will be able to support future populations of ELLs.

**Case study.** As previously mentioned, there are very few resources on the subject of supporting ELLs in the art classroom, specifically in regard to building language acquisition and communication skills. I hoped to fill some of those research gaps through a case study, as this type of study allowed me to observe how different teaching strategies directly impact language acquisition and communication skill development. A descriptive case study was conducted, as the goal was to analyze different teaching strategies, and determine which of those strategies support ELLs in building their language acquisition and communication skills. The focus was on three different art teaching methods meant to support language acquisition and communication skill development in ELLs. These units, as previously mentioned, were small group collaborative art making, large group collaborative art making, and choice based art



making. I chose these three in particular because they are common units utilized by art teachers. I hoped that by using commonly taught units, my research would be more relevant to other art educators and as a result, more useful. Some verbal research methods that were used in this study included student interviews, informal observations made while students are making art, interviews and discussions and a student questionnaire given at the beginning and end of the study to determine any changes that they personally noticed. Some visual methods that were used include taking photographs of student artwork and student collaborations, and taking videos of collaborations and authentic discussions students had about the art making process.

As mentioned, a confidential questionnaire was administered to sixth graders. There was one standardized questionnaire, as seen in appendix C. Some things to consider are that a questionnaire is subject to misinterpretation and potentially prone to error. The questions may have had limited scope.

**Methods to be used.** I conducted brief interviews with some students on their experiences in being ELLs in a public, urban elementary school. A goal for some of the interview questions was to determine how to support the study participants the best in terms of language acquisition and communication skill development. See appendix C for specifics. Through specific questions, I predicted that I would be able to determine how my students perceive how they learn best, both in the art classroom and elsewhere. Student participant responses to questions six, seven, and eight of my interview protocol in appendix C were especially useful in determining this information because students had an opportunity to introspectively reflect on when they felt most successful in terms of

academic learning as well as which teaching strategies supported them best in their own communication skill development and language acquisition.

As previously mentioned, in designing these curriculum guides, I looked closely at a curriculum guide called *Art as a Tool for Teachers of English Language Learners*, written by The New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies in (2010) that ties supporting ELLs through arts based learning. *The Pennsylvania State Standards for English Language Development* (2017) were also used in the writing of this curriculum. Writing out curriculum and taking notes on what does and does not work was crucial for the study because it helped to determine which teaching strategies support language acquisition and communication skill development for ELLs.

### **Data Collection**

**Context.** As the art teacher to the study participants, I aimed to be seen as an authority figure, as well as a supportive and helpful adult. I set up the classroom in a way that was simple to navigate and conducive for art making and other related learning activities. I kept routines as consistent as possible throughout the study, to maintain the comfortable and safe art-making environment that students were used to. Students had assigned seats that I determined for them. In the classroom, students sat at six tables. These tables were heterogeneous in terms of cultural and ethnic identity as well as gender. ELLs who are still learning English were seated in proximity to other students who can translate for them as needed. There was a bulletin board set up with pictures of art supplies we were using, in addition to instructions and state standards that explained why we were learning what we were learning.

In conjunction with what the Pennsylvania Department of Education (2017) recommends in the official *Standards for English Language Learners* document, I regularly checked in with my ELLs, showing visual examples on my phone or iPad. When checking in with my ELLs, I spoke slowly and clearly, and asked questions to check for understanding. As I also mentioned earlier, I explained a few details of the study to the students, to be sure that they were comfortable participating and understood why the study was conducted. During the study, I checked in with students specifically for feedback about their interest level in different kinds of art making and their perceptions on their communication skills.

**Literature sources.** In researching language acquisition for this study, commonalities in data collection methods were found. As previously mentioned, the goal for this research was to establish whether or not the art teaching strategies used would be successful for ELLs in terms of language acquisition and communication skill development. Kerlavge (1998) photographed student work, interviewed young learners and took anecdotal notes on what she noticed when she was studying aspects of child development as it pertained to art making. In their case study that focused on arts integration with regards to ELL development, Ingraham and Nuttall (2016) also used interviews in addition to focus groups and written notes and documentation to determine how ELL students were getting their academic needs met, specifically regarding standardized test data. Students were also interviewed in this study. Eubanks (2002) also used a focus group to determine which teaching strategies art teachers in the Atlanta area were using with their ELLs. She looked specifically at which strategies they found to be effective. Similar to Kerlavge, student artwork was photographed in this study. Spina

(2006) used a different strategy from the other researchers mentioned in this thesis.

Spina compared two fifth grade ESL classes in a title one school. One class used an arts based curriculum and the other used a traditional ESOL curriculum. While different curriculums were not compared in this study, the effectiveness of different teaching strategies was studied. This study was similar to Spina's in this regard. In Spina's study, students took pre- and post- tests in both their native language and in English to assess reading skills. In this study, a pre- and post- questionnaire-style assessment was also administered to students. Kerlavage, Spina, Ingraham and Nuttall all observed children in a natural teaching environment. They all took anecdotal notes. See appendix C for more details on how anecdotal notes were taken in this study.

**Methods of data collection.** As mentioned, in this case study, sixth grade students were observed. This specific grouping of students was important to study for this research because three different teaching strategies were compared, each with a different class. This study focused on collaborative art making where students work together in small groups, choice based art making and whole-class collaborative art making. These three strategies were chosen specifically because they all give students room to interact with one another, socially and through art making practices. As I taught using three different methods, it was not possible for this to be an immersive study into each of the methods, but instead a survey of three methods. I was a participant in the study because I was the teacher in the classroom and at the same time administering the study and observing students. For this study, I observed students for a period of eight class periods between January 30<sup>th</sup>-May 4<sup>th</sup>. This long period of time was given to take into account make up days for snow days, assemblies and other unforeseeable events.

The only exception to this timeline was with class B, the choice-based art making class. For class B, I introduced different centers, one week at a time, prior to the official start of the study. I did this because choice based art making is a very different method that I thought students would need some time to adjust to. As a result, the timeline for that class was December 4-May 4. This way, students were used to choice-based routines and procedures prior to the start of the study and I was able to focus on specific methods each week of the study. I have recorded my observations of my three units of study through photographs, videos, an informal journal (see appendix C for details), and through observation protocol.

**Sampling.** For this research to remain consistent, each class needed to have students of similar demographics. Demographics could have changed by the end of the study. Some students may have moved into or out of the school, as is the culture of teaching in an urban public school; however, demographics did not change substantially. The following details the demographics of the sixth grade classes at the start of the study. Each of the three sixth grade classes had a similar number of ELLs. Class A had 11 ELLs, class B had 10 ELLs and class C had 8. There were also similar racial demographics between the three classes. Class A had six students who identified as African-American, class B had eight students who identified as African-American and class C had six students who identified as African-American. Class A had fourteen students who identified as Asian. Class B had thirteen students who identified as Asian. Class C had eleven students who identified as Asian. Class A had three students who identified as Caucasian, class B had three students who identified as Caucasian, and class C had six students who identified as Caucasian. Each class had one student who

identified as Hispanic. Each class had one student with Autism. Class B had five other students with disabilities, which will not be detailed here, as the details do not impact the study. Between the three sixth grade classes, class sizes were also similar. See the below chart for more demographic details. This chart may be helpful in navigating differences in languages and other needs between sixth grade classes.

	Number of students	ESOL	Languages spoken by students	SPED
Class A	24	11	Mandarin, Yue/Cantonese, Vietnamese	1
Class B	25	10	Mandarin, Cantonese, Minnan Fukiene, Indonesian, Spanish	6
Class C	24	8	Mandarin, Spanish, Greek	1

*Table 1.* Demographic information for the three sixth grade classes at McCall School during the 2017-2018 school year.

**Interviews.** Students from each class were interviewed, as participant interpretation and observation of the teaching strategies used were insightful. Interviews and observations were conducted in a uniform manner. Technology, written questions and assignments were used, as well as visuals to communicate information with students who have limited English language skills.

***Artifacts.*** Curriculum guides that were used in each of the three units used in the study were written out. See appendix D and below, in the “journaling” section of this chapter for more details. Data was gathered in the classroom, during class time. This data culminated in lesson plans that support ELLs as previously mentioned. Photographs and videos of students working together and of student made artwork were also taken. Photographs and videos helped in observing student body language and students’ abilities to communicate with one another over time. I member checked to determine student participant levels of comfort and understanding. This helped to identify which students needed extra support with communication skill development.

***Journals.*** As previously mentioned, notes were taken throughout the study. I used a journal throughout this process to determine which teaching strategies support language acquisition and communication skill development in ELLs in the urban public school art classroom. Each time I used my journal, I followed the same protocol that I created. This protocol involved a series of prompts that I responded to after each time I taught a sixth grade class. My responses were informal, but over time provided helpful information on who needed extra support, what students were working on, who was engaged in the lesson and how students were communicating with one another and myself. More information on this can be found in chapter five. I spent around 15 minutes each day that I see a sixth grade class jotting down notes, either during my lunch or after school. I did this over the eight class period course of the study, for a total of 24 journal entries. I have cross-referenced results with responses from student questionnaires, videos and photographs of students working and photographs of student artwork. See appendix C for more details. During the study, for each of the three sixth

grade classes, as part of my journaling, I also took notes on which elements of the unit were successful, why they were successful, and which would need adjustments prior to the next time each of these lessons is taught. I used a general rubric and standards as seen in my lesson plans in appendix D to assist me in making these decisions.

***Questionnaires.*** There was also a questionnaire that students filled out prior to the study and again after the study. This was an important indicator of how students were able to communicate over time, where their language acquisition skills were, and how they genuinely felt about art making at the beginning and end of the study.

***Limitations.*** As mentioned, a number of different data collection methods were utilized. A variety of methods produced a broader range of results. However, I was the researcher, and this was a qualitative study, so the study only took place over the course of eight class periods. Being aware that this was a very short window of time, I had lessons pre-scripted and audio recorded pieces of each lesson, so that the study could be revisited and notes were made. In addition, I only conducted interviews with three students. In interviewing only three students, I am aware that I chose to only interview a small sampling of participants. The students that I chose to interview may have their own biases on the study. It was not possible in the short time frame of this study to interview more students as in depth as I was able to with the three chosen study participants. I looked at all of my journal entries and questionnaires from all of students, however, in my written research, I only referenced information from these documents that are found necessary.



**Data Analysis**

Art making activity observations were also used to make informed decisions about my data and the validity of the study. This included written documentation, photographs, and videos of art making activity observations. With this method, the natural, flexible setting that students were familiar with was maintained while data was collected. This method supported many of the other data collection methods that were used. This approach would generate relevant, qualitative data and is useful for studying classroom art making activities.

**Organization of data.** As previously mentioned, I kept a folder on my computer of notes I have taken, audio recordings from student interviews, photos and videos that I took, and digital copies of student questionnaires. Information was recorded chronologically and used for general data purposes. Each student interviewed had their own sub-folder on my computer. All informal notes and questionnaires related to that student were in an individual folder, in chronological order within the folder. There were also photos, videos, and audio recordings in these folders.

**Coding of data.** The research goal was to determine best practices for teaching art that support language acquisition and communication skill development for urban, public, elementary school ELLs through art making. With that goal in mind, I used the data to determine which of my three teaching practices (small group collaborations, choice-based, and large group collaborations) supported language acquisition and communication skill development in students, as mentioned. In the interviews I conducted with students and questionnaires I administered, I looked for language that was overly positive or negative. In the beginning of the study, I looked out for students

who were refusing to respond, or who did not seem to understand questions due to a language or communication barrier. Over the course of the study, I looked for positive or negative changes in the language that students were using. I looked for changes in how students were communicating with each other and myself. Through informal note taking, I was able to recognize when students were supporting one another, working independently, and answering questions among other observations.

**Methods of analysis.** At the conclusion of the study, I looked for patterns over time like the ones mentioned above. I compiled all patterns relating to individual students and determined if the study had an overwhelmingly positive or negative result. Data specific to ELLs in these classes was looked at, as well as whole class data to determine whether or not there is a difference. More information on the results can be found in chapter four.

### **Timeline for the Study**

**Process.** To officially begin this case study, I first needed to successfully complete my qualifying review on December 9<sup>th</sup>. At this point, I had ongoing conversations with my principal and sixth grade homeroom teachers regarding expectations for the case study. After I gained approval from the review board at Moore to begin the study, I officially requested permission from my principal to begin the study. I also checked in with sixth grade homeroom teachers, to remind them of the study and to ensure their support in the collection of consent forms. At this point, I learned from my principal that the school district had its own form of IRB process. I followed that process as quickly as possible, to ensure that I was not delaying my study. This did delay my study, but only by a few short weeks. After I collected consent forms, around January

30<sup>th</sup>, students filled out questionnaires during my class time. The case study begun after all participating students filled out questionnaires. All questionnaires and consent forms were stored securely in a physical or virtual file. I tested three different art teaching strategies-one with each sixth grade class for eight class periods between January 30<sup>th</sup>-May 4<sup>th</sup>. See Appendix A for more details.

At the start of the case study, I explained to students that I was looking to support English Language Learners as best I could in the art classroom with support in English Language acquisition and communication skills. I went on to explain that the research will benefit all of them, including students who are not ELLs, because in the long run, excellent communication skills often determine who gets a promotion or is chosen for a raise, among so many other opportunities in the future.

Throughout the case study, I checked in with students and informally conferenced with them regarding their progress. After each time that I saw a sixth grade class, I spent 15 minutes journaling my observations. I interviewed three students, one from each class, in April. At the conclusion of the study, around May 4<sup>th</sup>, I had students fill out questionnaires again. I compared results of questionnaires and analyzed other data, using protocol that I had made, throughout the study. Between March and June, I compiled, coded, and reviewed data. By June, I finished analyzing the data, with my final thesis chapter complete.

## Chapter IV--- Results of the Study

### Introduction to Data Collection Process

Considering that this study focuses on the School District of Philadelphia being a gateway for a consistently high rate of newly immigrated English Language Learners (ELLs) to begin their immersion in a new country, and Eubanks (2002) suggests that the art classroom may be the first place in which ELL students feel comfortable and capable in school, three best practices for art educators to use to support success for ELL students in an urban elementary art classroom were explored.

**Data collection methods.** Data was collected in the form of questionnaires, student interviews, informal questioning, student artwork, photographs of students working, and a researcher journal to determine which verbal and physical results and responses were overwhelmingly positive, neutral, or negative. These data collection methods proved to be varied enough where I was able to reach different kinds of learners and pick up on trends happening with my study participants. I looked specifically at what kind of written or verbal language study participants were using. I looked at whether or not study participants were supporting other students through verbal explanations, directions and dialogue, and whether or not other students were supporting the learning of study participants. I also looked at student engagement of the art making itself. I had an understanding of what the study participants were capable of prior to the start of the study, so I knew, generally, how long it would take for each student to complete tasks if engaged in an assignment and what that typically looked like for that student. In my journal, I wrote about my curriculum, specifically regarding what works for students and what I can do to improve my curriculum for students. I wrote about supporting groups of

students and individual students with language acquisition and communication skill development through art making. One of my three study participants was a student who did not previously participate much in art class, due to a language barrier. This student had been learning English for two years. I also chose one student who speaks a mix of Mandarin, Cantonese, and English at home. My third study participant was an ELL but mostly spoke English at school and at home. This student was originally from Philadelphia, and I decided to include them because ELLs born in the US are often overlooked in research regarding ELLs. We often think of ELLs as people who are immigrants, even though 62% of ELLs in grades 6-12 were born in the US (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

	Student A	Student B	Student C
Week 1 Q1	-	+	-
Week 1 Q2	-	-	+
Week 1 Q3	-	n	n
Date	22-Feb	21-Feb	20-Feb
Week 2 Q1	-	+	-
Week 2 Q2	+	+	-
Week 2 Q3	n	+	n
Date	1-Mar	28-Feb	27-Feb
Week 3 Q1	+	+	+
Week 3 Q2	+	+	n
Week 3 Q3	n	+	-
Date	15-Mar	14-Mar	13-Mar
Week 4 Q1	+	-	+
Week 4 Q2	+	+	+
Week 4 Q3	n	+	-
Date	5-Apr	3/28/18	20-Mar
Week 5 Q1	n	+	-
Week 5 Q2	+	+	+
Week 5 Q3	n	+	-
Date	11-Apr	3-Apr	3/27/18
Week 6 Q1	+	-	+
Week 6 Q2	+	+	+
Week 6 Q3	-	-	+
Date	12-Apr	10-Apr	4/3/18
Week 7 Q1	+	+	-
Week 7 Q2	+	-	+
Week 7 Q3	n	+	-
Date	19-Apr	24-Apr	4/10/18
Week 8 Q1	+	+	+
Week 8 Q2	+	n	+
Week 8 Q3	+	+	+

## Questions:

1. Did this student support other students in their learning today? What did I observe?
2. How successful was this student in completing tasks/assignments?
3. Make note of specific language this student used today. Did they use overwhelmingly positive or negative language?

## Key:

Positive results for that question for two or three study participants (Light Blue)

Neutral results for that question for two or three study participants (Red)

Negative results for that question for two or three study participants (Yellow)

See other documents for detailed notes.

*Figure 2.* Data Matrix. This data matrix shows participant trends in three areas over the course of the study.

*Instances of Growth.* I studied and analyzed instances of growth for my three study participants with regards to the best practices chosen for this study. How study participants physically approached art making as well as their verbal comments and physical body language when approaching art tasks were studied over eight weeks. I completed a data matrix compiling this information over time for all three students to track this growth-to determine if it was positive, negative, or neutral. If a study participant was not communicating, not using class time appropriately, or was using language such as “I don’t want to” or “I don’t care” in regards to the work they were doing or the concepts they were learning, that would be tracked as negative. If they were misusing time, not working, or creating art that was sloppy or lazy for them personally, that would also be tracked as negative. When I found study participants were engaged, problem solving, asking questions, or using language such as “I like when” or “This is fun” in regards to the work they were doing or the concepts they were learning, that would be tracked as positive. If they were actively problem solving different strategies to use in approaching art making, or were actively engaged and working thoughtfully and carefully to the best of their own ability, it would be tracked as positive. If a study participant was not especially engaged in problem solving with regards to art making and was not using positive or negative body language or verbal language, their behavior was considered neutral when tracking growth. I also kept data on when study participants were working independently, supporting other students, or asking for help, which was considered positive in my data matrix. When students were not working independently, actively using inappropriate language, or disrupting other students, this was considered negative in my data matrix. I looked at the data matrix to see if there were positive,

negative or neutral trends over time and compared which weeks my results were the same across study participants.

***Changes in Methodology.*** There were two areas where I veered from my original methodology. The first was because I was not expecting to be required to complete a second IRB process for the School District, as it had not been a part of the process for previous masters candidates in this program. As a result, I was caught off guard and needed to produce a lot of information very quickly as to not change my timeline drastically. However, my timeline did shift by a few weeks. For this reason, I decided to study three ELL students instead of my originally planned six. The second area that changed was my lesson plan for class C. The students did not seem especially interested in my original plan of studying Louise Nevelson, so I changed their large group project to be a series of stop motion animation videos, which they were much more excited about. Another notable factor is that due to my timeline shifting, my study took place during PSSA testing. Testing may have impacted student attitude or engagement in activities. I had also hoped to include students in this study who spoke a variety of languages as their native language; however, I was limited by which students returned their permission slips to me before the study began.

***Entering the Field of Research.*** Entering the field of research was done as a natural process in teaching my regularly scheduled art classes. The major difference was, that at this point, I was formally conducting research. I had already been making notes, keeping records and documenting student growth as part of my process as an educator. In the presentation of data section, data is presented on overwhelmingly positive, neutral or negative responses to specific questions or problems, as explained earlier in this



chapter. Data for this study was split into four sections to easily recognize which results were found with which participant or best practice. The first three sections were split by research participant, and as a result, by best practice, and the fourth section spoke to comparisons and observations overlapping across the selected best practices. My teaching style involves a lot of student input and elevating student voices. As a result, most of my student data revolved around perception of the three students in the study and their specific needs.

### **Presentation of Data by Case Study**

**Introduction.** This section gives information regarding the three study participants. Information specific to these three students will be found, including a brief backstory as well as a bit of insight on what academic and social supports the student found to be useful for their language acquisition and communication skill development. In the data analysis section, information is found tying overall findings of research together.

**Student A.** Student A has attended McCall since Kindergarten. This student spoke Mandarin, Cantonese, and English at home and found adults at school and at home to be an excellent resource for support when struggling with communicating. Student A has found working in groups and getting to physically explore materials to be extremely successful learning strategies for academic and communication skill development. This student finds much success in academics and in communicating with others in art class due to the visual and hands on elements of the course. A favorite lesson from this year for student A was the papier-mâché unit associated with the lesson taught during this study for class A. When prompted for more details, the student responded, “So far, it’s

[my favorite lesson has] been the papier-mâché. Because I feel like everybody can help each other and we can make something we really like together. When I go to art, I can work with my friends and I can interact and I know it [the content of the lesson] better” (Personal communication, April 10, 2018). I found that over time this student became much more engaged in art classroom lessons due to the social and collaborative nature of the unit I was teaching. I observed this engagement through the careful and focused art that I saw the student making, the thoughtful questions that the student asked, the way that the student communicated with classmates, the words that the student used when interacting with classmates and adults, and through my interview protocol.

**Student B.** Student B moved to Philadelphia from China two years ago and has been attending McCall School ever since. This student mostly spoke Mandarin Chinese at home but also spoke a bit of English at home as well. Student B said, “I can tell my mom that I’m not really doing well [in understanding and learning English] and she will, like, give me a teacher to help me with the English” (Personal communication, April 10, 2018). Student B had parents who were very supportive in regards to their child developing skills in academics, creative arts and learning English. Student B had a few friends at school who were also helpful and supported student B in language development by occasionally translating, being patient with them in English, and demonstrating when student B did not understand a direction. Something that I observed about student B over time was that this student loved to help and support classmates with different art making processes and techniques. Supporting others was a big incentive for this student to develop more fluency in English. Confidence was built when there was an opportunity to support a classmate. I observed student B supporting classmates on several occasions,

and student B confirmed, when asked, that they loved to help their classmates and that supporting classmates boosted their confidence and supported their English language acquisition. As a result, I concluded that student B found art class to be a supportive and encouraging environment for language acquisition and social skill development. Two-thirds of the way through the study, student B was transferred from class B to class C. This class transfer had a small impact on my study because it meant, from that point on, I would only be focusing on two teaching methods, instead of three. However, I continued the study as planned.

**Student C.** Similar to student A, student C has also attended McCall since Kindergarten. This student mostly spoke English at school and at home; however, their native language was Mandarin. This student was originally from Philadelphia. Student C enjoyed working in groups and by themselves. I found that student C was not interested in the stop motion animation unit at all for the first few weeks of the unit. This student was not supporting classmates in the unit and was completing a minimal amount of work. When I checked in with student C regarding my concern over their lack of interest, they told me that they loved working with color and that the project was not colorful enough. Their group had chosen to create a stop motion animation video using pencil and paper, making their video entirely black and white. Over time, student C showed more interest in the assignment, even taking ownership over recording images on the iPad for the stop motion animation video.

**Data Analysis**

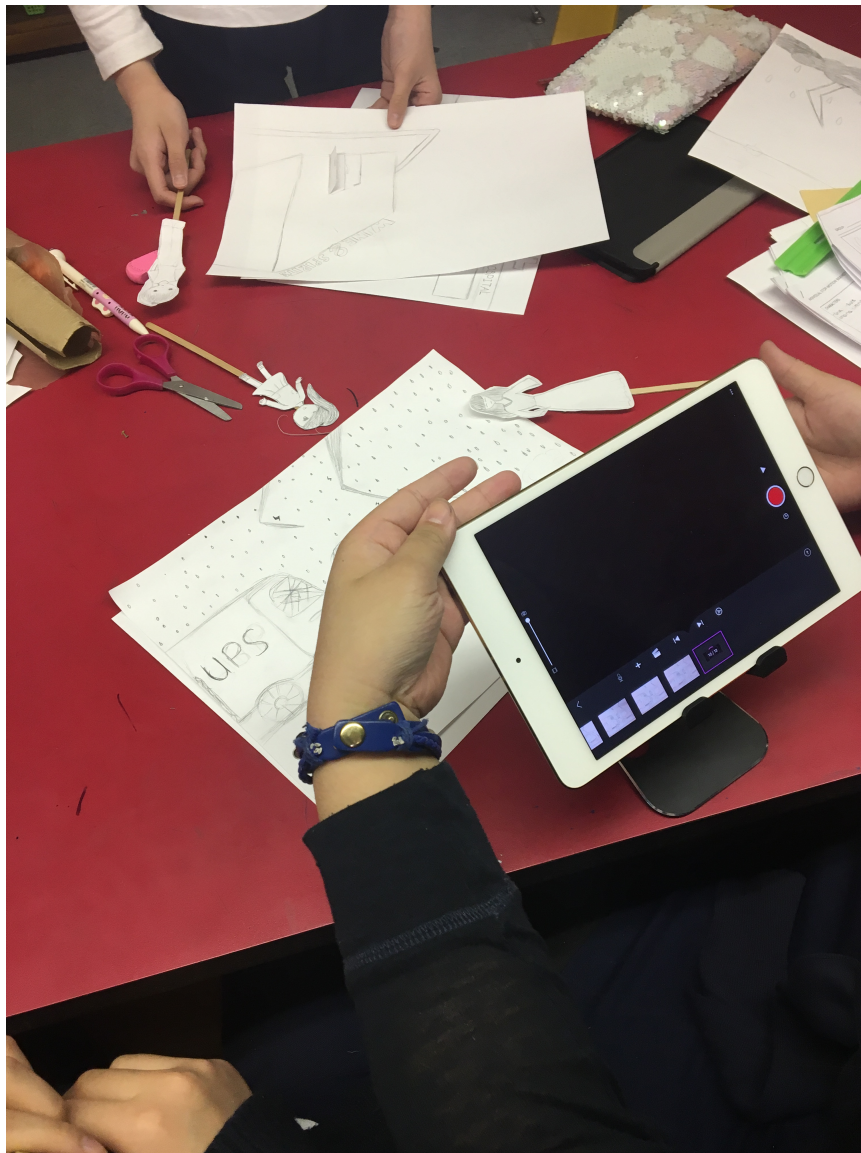
**Coding strategies.** I color-coded my data matrix, as seen in figure five, which included information from my assessment protocol, interview protocol, observation protocol, as well as other notes and teaching protocol. I also looked at photos of art making over time. My data matrix was a grouping of data organized chronologically by student in an excel spreadsheet. When two or three study participants had positive results in the same week, I colored those areas blue. When two or three study participants had neutral results in the same week, I color coded those areas red. When two or three study participants had negative results, I color coded those areas yellow. Color-coding made it easier to see positive, neutral, or negative trends over time.

**Information revealed through coding strategies.** At the beginning of the study, many ELL students stated that they found it easy to follow my directions, but that they often had trouble communicating with their peers in English. When considering needs for language acquisition and communication skill development of ELLs, lesson content also makes a big difference. With each lesson, it was important to ask, “Can students relate to this lesson and/or make their own choices/feel empowered in the lesson?” I found that when ELLs were engaged and self-driven, there were more positive results, according to the data. I categorized data by date in an excel form (positive, negative, or neutral), and documented quotes and specific instances and growth. I was able to meet my goal for this study, which was to provide a safe and nurturing environment where students felt comfortable communicating, where it was ok to make mistakes. I was also able to keep in consideration that students may be coming from a test, lecture, environment where they are hungry, tired, or experiencing other outside environmental

factors. By the last week of the study there were blue-coded results in my data matrix, as seen in figure two, for each question and all three study participants were observed assisting classmates, actively problem solving in their art making and talking about how excited they were about their projects. Four photos are shown below of students working in action and screenshots of student-made stop motion animation videos. More photo documentation is shown in Appendix E, including more in progress photos and photos and screenshots of completed student work.



*Figure 3.* A photo of student A working on a collaborative project. This study participant is seen teaching her group members how she wrapped her soft sculpture with yarn.



*Figure 4.* An action shot of student C filming a stop motion animation video as a collaborative art project. This student loves working with color, but was in a group that chose to create their video entirely in black and white.





Figure 5. Screenshot from student C's group stop motion film.



Figure 6. Screenshot from student C's group stop motion film.





*Figure 7.* Screenshot from student B's group stop motion film.



*Figure 8.* Completed sculptures created by student A and classmates.

	Student A	Student B	Student C
Week 1 Q1	-	+	-
Week 1 Q2	-	-	+
Week 1 Q3	-	n	n
Date	22-Feb	21-Feb	20-Feb
Week 2 Q1	-	+	-
Week 2 Q2	+	+	-
Week 2 Q3	n	+	n
Date	1-Mar	28-Feb	27-Feb
Week 3 Q1	+	+	+
Week 3 Q2	+	+	n
Week 3 Q3	n	+	-
Date	15-Mar	14-Mar	13-Mar
Week 4 Q1	+	-	+
Week 4 Q2	+	+	+
Week 4 Q3	n	+	-
Date	5-Apr	3/28/18	20-Mar
Week 5 Q1	n	+	-
Week 5 Q2	+	+	+
Week 5 Q3	n	+	-
Date	11-Apr	3-Apr	3/27/18
Week 6 Q1	+	-	+
Week 6 Q2	+	+	+
Week 6 Q3	-	-	+
Date	12-Apr	10-Apr	4/3/18
Week 7 Q1	+	+	-
Week 7 Q2	+	-	+
Week 7 Q3	n	+	-
Date	19-Apr	24-Apr	4/10/18
Week 8 Q1	+	+	+
Week 8 Q2	+	n	+
Week 8 Q3	+	+	+

Questions:

4. Did this student support other students in their learning today? What did I observe?
5. How successful was this student in completing tasks/assignments?
6. Make note of specific language this student used today. Did they use overwhelmingly positive or negative language?

Key:

Positive results for that question for two or three study participants (Light Blue)

Neutral results for that question for two or three study participants (Red)

Negative results for that question for two or three study participants (Yellow)

See other documents for detailed notes.

*Figure 9. Color Coded Data Matrix.* This data matrix shows participant trends in three areas over the course of the study and is color-coded to show which weeks multiple students are found showing the same results.

**Comparisons and overlaps in data.** According to figure five, all study participants were showing negative results at the beginning of the study. Over time, results became more positive from all three participants, starting with week 3 and lasting throughout the study. As mentioned previously, the major factor tying ELLs together is that they are learning English as a non-native English speaker. ELLs have different personalities, learning styles, interests and opinions. Each of my three research participants had a different learning style. Students A and B showed positive growth in language acquisition as I observed them speaking in English with classmates. I also observed all three participants showing positive growth in communication skill development, as they were successfully working together with classmates to create a finished product. I found that my results were very specific to these three students and their individual skill sets, interests and personalities.

### **Summary of Findings**

In my first bi-weekly summary, I found that many students, including my study participants, stated that they were able to easily follow directions in my class, but sometimes a lack of excitement regarding curriculum kept them from being interested and engaged in a particular unit or lesson. I then altered my curriculum to be more open-ended and tailored to student interests. Through bi-weekly summaries and teaching protocol, I kept track of whether or not I have been successful in keeping students interested in their work. By week 12, I was making notes that all or most students were engaged in their work. Students were used to routines, knew what was expected of them, and were interested in their work because the unit was more open-ended than previous

units had been. Through these notes, I found a positive link between intrinsic motivation and positive communication skills. More details can be found below.

I have noticed that when students are intrinsically motivated, they are more likely to positively communicate with each other, even in a language that is difficult for them (English). For example, one of my study participants was really struggling for the first half of the school year. This student did not feel comfortable writing in English, had weak reading and English comprehension, and often did not do work without being prompted. However, two weeks into my research, this student was getting their own supplies and excitedly sharing with me what they were working on! It was exciting to see their complete change in attitude. I have also found this intrinsic motivation trend to be the case throughout my data collection.

## **Chapter V --- Discussions and Implications for the Field**

### **Introduction to Findings**

By the end of the study, I found that regardless of external stressors and situations, all three of my study participants were using their words to positively interact and communicate with classmates, helping and sharing ideas. These findings were backed up through data in my data matrix. My bi-weekly summaries and teaching protocol showed that, over time, study participants took ownership over their work and eventually influenced other members of their team through positive encouragement, excitement over the assignment, and task delegation. While proof for my findings can be found in chapter four and my appendices, my interpretation of these findings can be found below.

### **Presentation of Findings**

**Findings Presented Regarding Research Question.** Driven by my research question, I hoped to determine through this thesis whether or not three concepts, mentioned below, held true in my classroom. As stated throughout this thesis, I used several techniques to measure my findings, including recorded interviews of my three study participants, photos of student work in progress, photos of completed student artwork and my own journaling and observations throughout the research process. Specifically, I was hoping to back the claims I made in my research question that collaborative art making supports communication skill development in ELLs, language acquisition in ELLs and student success. I was pleasantly surprised to find that my research supported all of the above claims. I observed students communicating successfully with each other in a positive way, asking each other questions about the

assignment and having engaged conversations directly related to their work. I also noticed my English language learning study participants using English more and more throughout the study. In addition, according to their responses on pre- and post-questionnaires, my study participants felt more successful after collaborative art making.

**Findings Presented Regarding Literature.** I found that the literature that I had read while working on my second chapter of this thesis matched nicely with my findings. There were a few passages in particular that I found to be particularly insightful. Regarding how collaborative art making supports communication skill development in ELLs as well as student engagement and intrinsic motivation support skill building and risk taking, I found the same results as the New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies (2010) found in writing its curriculum. The curriculum states:

By integrating the arts and art- making into English language teaching and learning, students will develop and deepen their understanding of their own and others' human experience. In combination with reading, writing, speaking and listening, the arts can open doors for high levels of analysis and also challenge students to explore themselves and their surroundings, and thus find avenues for sophisticated comprehension and communication. (p. 1)

Literature also supported my finding that collaborative art making supports language acquisition in ELLs. Ingraham and Nuttall (2011) said, "[Through arts-integration], the ELL learner is adjusting and growing in confidence, allowing an attitude of success to emerge, risk-taking to evolve, and flourishing and thriving and prosper" (p. 12). I also

found that when presented a number of ways (orally, demonstration, written, visually), instruction was more effective in reaching a larger number of students. I was glad to see that Eubanks (2002) also found this instruction method to be successful. “Teachers in separate groups noted that visuals benefit different kinds of learners: ‘I use the visuals, the auditory, and lots of body language. I feel it's made me a better teacher because I am teaching to all different kinds of learners including these [ESOL] children’” (p 42). In addition, I found that collaborative art making supports student success. Ingraham and Nuttall (2011) also backed this finding. “The sentiment of collaboration as an important factor in student success is not a rarity; many researchers have noted that through collaboration, more knowledge is possible” (p 11).

**Findings Presented Regarding Research Environment.** I found that in my research environment, collaborative art making supported communication skill development in ELLs. Student A specifically referenced this in interview question 8. This study participant stated that working collaboratively helped them to understand other people better and to understand projects better. This student also mentioned that collaborative assignments encourage students to ask each other questions if they do not understand something. I also found that when I gave students some choice and ownership over their art making, I was supporting student engagement. As mentioned previously, this increase in student engagement was seen clearly in my questionnaire results.

**Findings Presented Regarding Researcher.** When determining results, it was challenging for me to measure findings of collaborative art making as a support for language acquisition in ELLs. Students who were in early stages of English language



acquisition were not as readily communicative, so it was difficult to determine if they were building their communication skills and language acquisition, or just building communication skills. If I could do this study over, I would focus on communication skills and not even look at language acquisition. While it is just as important to concentrate on, I found that looking at both caused my research to be spread a little thinner than I would have liked.

I found there to be a correlation between student engagement and intrinsic motivation supporting skill building and risk taking. A student who was not a part of my study, but was in class B, would regularly call out and complain during art class early on in the school year. This student would often mention how insecure they felt in their art making and how they “weren’t good” at art. When I spoke with them about their change in confidence over the course of this study, they said, “I don’t think I’m better at art, but I feel more confident...and can take more risks without feeling like I’m [failing]” (Personal communication, May, 2018). This student had been working on nature related drawings for the majority of the choice-based unit that I taught with class B. Hearing this kind of feedback really drives this point home; that when students are engaged in what they are doing, they will continue to work at it and build their skills, whether or not they are successful.

I also found that when students were given some choice and ownership over their art making, student engagement was supported. I paid close attention to how this effected my study participants, but also looked at how choice and ownership over art making effected my gifted students, my students who have autism and other special needs, and my students who don’t fit any special needs categories. Overall, students in the classes

where I conducted my study asked me less questions, asked each other more questions and genuinely supported each other in art making, engaged in more discussions relevant to their art making (as noticed throughout my journaling), and complained far less (also noticed throughout my journaling).

When presented in a number of ways (orally, demonstration, written, visually), I found instruction was more effective in reaching a larger number of students. I would like to work more at focusing on how to effectively reach even more of my students, which I see as being a logical next step for me in my teaching.

### **Implications for the Field**

As mentioned in chapter one, this research will benefit art educators, educators who work with ELLs and education researchers. Through application of the findings of this research into their own teaching practice, this study will also support language and communication skill development for elementary school students of the aforementioned educators.

I found that all three teaching practices chosen for this study were successful with my students because students were able to work with and support their friends. In sixth grade, my students are at a developmental level where socialization is very important. Working on projects that allowed students to socialize throughout the process allowed them to be more excited about their projects. Many students even chose to spend extra time outside of class working on these projects. Students in other grades, not involved in the study, generally did not choose to spend extra time outside of class working on their projects. Students in my three sixth grade classes were also able to interpret assignments with personal interests in mind. This opportunity for personal interpretation led them to

being intrinsically motivated about completing their work. Many of these students also were very excited about taking their artwork home and keeping it, which I do not always find to be the case with middle school students.

I specifically chose to teach a small group collaborative lesson, a large group collaborative lesson, and a choice based unit for this study. Through my literature review, I determined that those would be three easily accessible teaching practices that could be applied to the teaching repertoire of other educators working in varied educational settings and adapted in whichever way that educator determines appropriate for their setting.

As mentioned in chapter two, there is very little research on supporting English Language Learners in the art classroom and even less research on supporting groups of students where ELLs speak different languages from one another. As previously mentioned in chapter 2, in Pennsylvania alone, there are 214 different languages spoken by ELLs, according to the PA State Department of Education (2013). This study was conducted to support those students and to begin to close that gap in research. I hope that other researchers will use this study as a jumping off point and continue research to support ELLs in the visual arts classroom.

### **Implications for Further Research**

In the future, I hope to present on my findings of this research at conferences in hopes that these research results can support other art educators, researchers, and elementary school aged students. I will submit applications to present at PAEA and NAEA in addition to submitting this thesis to be published. It is my hope that other people see my research and use it as a jumping off point for more research related to

supporting ELLs where multiple languages are spoken in the art room. I also hope to submit on future findings to academic papers.

As a result of the findings mentioned above, I would love to do more research on how to make my instruction even more effective for my ELL students through the presentation of information in a number of ways (i.e.: orally, demonstrations, written, visually). While I currently present information in a number of ways in my classroom, I would love to conduct research on how effective my methods of presentation are and how I can make them even more effective. I am also interested in researching how to support ELLs in the art room through art assessments. I am interested to learn which methods of art assessment support my ELL students and which methods could be improved upon.

### **Conclusion**

**Reflections on Research Question.** Throughout this process, I have found, not only through my literature review, methodology and findings, but also through general teaching practice and through speaking with students, colleagues and parents, that the art classroom is absolutely the first place where many ELL students feel comfortable and capable in school. I am glad that I chose to research a topic that supports ELLs, particularly ELLs in urban classrooms, as there is less research that supports those students than other demographics. Especially considering our current political climate, I am of the opinion that it is very important to do all we can to professionally support our ELL and immigrant student populations. In the following five paragraphs, I make connections tying my own personal reflections to my research question and to other aspects of my thesis.

**Reflections on Findings.** I have been thinking a lot about my findings as I regularly reflect on what is successful about what and how I teach and what I can improve on. I was not surprised to find that collaborative art making processes supported my ELLs in their language acquisition and communication skill development. I was glad to see that my findings supported my initial goal to determine some best practices for art educators to use to support ELLs in an urban elementary art classroom. More details on these reflections can be found below, particularly in my data analysis reflections.

**Reflections on Literature.** It was honestly very surprising to find such a large gap in literature regarding support for ELLs in the art classroom. Most of the information that I found was not especially recent, either. I had hoped to find current statistics on ELLs in Pennsylvania, but the most recent statistics I could find were from 2013. The only curriculum guides I could find were from New York and had not been updated in a number of years. The most relevant resource I found was an article from 2002, written by Paula Eubanks. As a result of my interest in this text, I reached out to Eubanks herself for more information. She is now retired. She was graciously able to direct me to some folks currently in the field, who I plan to reach out to after the conclusion of my thesis program, as one of my next steps for further research.

**Reflections on Data Collection and Methodology.** It was a challenge to determine how I would conduct my research, having never conducted a case study prior to this one. In hindsight, I do not think that I understood how I would be collecting data when I was creating my protocol. As a result, when I planned out my protocol, some questions would be more effective than others in collecting useable data. I found my questionnaire in my assessment protocol to be particularly effective and enlightening, as

results were confidential and students did not feel that their grade would be in jeopardy or that my opinion on them would change as a result of their responses. Honestly, my teaching protocol was one of the least effective protocols that I used because the questions that I asked did not produce much useable data. Asking myself “Who was working together?” was not a necessary question to ask, because in my small group and large group collaboration classes, students were assigned to a particular group and tended to work well with the same people each week within their groups. “Who was working together?” was an effective question to ask when looking at my choice based class; however, by the end of the study, none of my participants were in that class anymore. “What were students working on today?” was also not especially useful because I more or less stuck to my lesson plans in Appendix D, and each date matched up with a bullet point from the daily lessons category. “Who did you give extra support to today?” gleaned results that were useful in teaching, but not necessarily useful when conducting a study with only three participants, all of whom were in different classes. Asking myself for anecdotal notes or questions for students was a great idea, as I was able to capture a few moments that I could bring up in my thesis. My interview protocol also brought in some good data, but my observation protocol was so detailed that it was tough to find time to keep up with completing sections three days a week for eight weeks. Some of my protocol brought in useable data, and some of it did not. I will use this as a lesson to myself for future research I conduct.

**Reflections on Data Analysis.** Although this research was a descriptive case study, I found that if my research had been on an even more specific topic, it could have been even more successful. If I could do my methodology and research again, I would touch on language acquisition but would focus on communication skills. As I am not an expert on language acquisition, it was difficult to truly measure. As an educator, I actively focus on effective communication and communication skills, making this easier and more natural for me to measure as a researcher. Due to my protocol, I was able to successfully measure both, but possibly would have found even more success if I had focused on one.

**Personal Reflections on Research in General.** Through my research, I have reaffirmed that I am an excellent art educator, and I greatly enjoy presenting to adults and children. I have also reaffirmed that I enjoy teaching more than I enjoy academic writing, so, while this process was very exciting and eye opening, I do not anticipate conducting research on this scale again in the near future. In the future, I hope to continue my research with contributions to publications regarding future findings, and by presenting on my findings at conferences and events.

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## APPENDIX A

## Research Timeline

Month	Process	Steps to Accomplish
December	Seek Site Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing conversations with principal regarding study</li> <li>• Seek permission and documentation from principal</li> <li>• Qualifying Review (December 9)</li> <li>• Verbally check in with sixth grade teachers, to make them aware of the study and to ask for assistance in collecting permission slips</li> </ul>
December-January	Preparation for study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan lessons and prepare classroom for full span of study</li> <li>• School District IRB Process</li> </ul>
January-February	Seek Participant Permissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print, distribute, and collect consent forms for each student</li> <li>• Explain study to students</li> <li>• Conference with students who have questions or concerns</li> </ul>
Mid-February	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up physical folder and virtual folder to securely store questionnaires and other data related to the study</li> <li>• Print questionnaires for each student</li> <li>• Review questionnaire with students</li> </ul>
February 13	Begin Case Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up personal journal to take notes after each</li> </ul>

		class visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with participants on a weekly basis for eight weeks</li> </ul>
February 13-May 4	Collecting and Analyzing Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review questionnaire responses</li> <li>• Ongoing data analysis to determine if teaching practices support language acquisition and communication skill development in students</li> <li>• Ongoing written self reflection</li> <li>• Ongoing check-ins with students/verbal feedback from students</li> </ul>
March-April	Student Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review interview questions</li> <li>• Practice run using audio recording app on phone</li> </ul>
May	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print questionnaires for each student</li> <li>• Review questionnaire with students</li> </ul>
April-June	Final Touches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish analyzing and coding data</li> <li>• Follow up with students and classes as necessary</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX B**

**Letters of Consent**

**MA THESIS CONSENT FORM**

**RESEARCH SITE SUPPORT FORM**

Stephanie McKenna  
McCall School  
325 S 7<sup>th</sup> St

November 8, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I, Principal McKenna, give permission to Erica Mandell to conduct an action research study at McCall School during the spring 2018 semester in order to fulfill the requirements of her Master's thesis at Moore College of Art and Design. I understand that this project is intended to research best practices for art educators to use to support success for ELL students in an urban elementary art classroom.

I understand that Erica Mandell will be a teacher-researcher who will be teaching art while gathering data during the school day. I understand she will be collecting data using various methods including student interviews, surveys and conversations with selected teachers.

Sincerely,

---

Stephanie McKenna, Principal

**RECRUITMENT LETTER/INFORMED CONSENT**

Dear Parents/Guardians,

January 26, 2018

I am contacting you to request permission for your child to participate in research being completed at McCall School. We will continue to follow the PA State Standards for Arts and Humanities and the School District of Philadelphia art curriculum and this study will not impact time devoted to other academic subjects.

**What is this for?**

This is a study that is part of my graduate work at Moore College of Art and Design. I am interested in effective ways to support communication skills in the art classroom for students who are and who are not English Language Learners.

**What is my child being asked to do?**

Your child will be asked to complete a survey at the start and end of a regular instructional unit. A few students who complete the survey will be asked if they would like to take part in a short, audio-recorded interview of their school experience. All information will be kept confidential and students will not be identified by name when writing up the study results.

**What happens if I choose not to participate?**

Your child's participation is voluntary and there are no negative consequences for your child by not participating. Your relationship with your child's teachers or school will not be affected by your decision to participate or not participate in this study. If my child does participate, he/she may opt out of the study at any time without penalty.

**When will this study take place?**

This study will take place during art class between January 30<sup>th</sup> and March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

**Who can I contact if I have questions?**

You may contact me through email at [EMandell@philasd.org](mailto:EMandell@philasd.org) or by phone at (215) 965-8569 with any questions or concerns.

Thank you,

Ms. Erica Mandell  
Art Teacher  
McCall School  
325 S. 7th St  
Philadelphia PA 19106

If you consent for your child to participate, please detach below and return to the classroom teacher no later than January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018:

---

I, \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby give permission for  
Parent / Guardian Name  
my child, \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this research.

---

Parent / Guardian Signature

o Audio recording is part of this research. **Please check one of the following:**

- ☐ I consent to have my child audio recorded.  
☐ I do NOT consent to my child being audio recorded.





## CHINESE RECRUITMENT LETTER/INFORMED CONSENT

親愛的家長/監護人，

2018 年 1 月 26 日

我請你的孩子參加麥考爾學校的一項研究。我們將繼續遵循賓夕法尼亞州的藝術與人文標準和費城學區藝術標準，這不會影響其他學科的時間安排。

### 這個是來做什麼的？

這是研究和摩爾藝術與設計學院研究生工作的一部分。我有興趣找到有效的方法來支持學習英語的學生在美術課上的溝通技巧。

### 我的孩子被要求做什麼？

您的孩子將被要求在正式教學單元的開始和結束時完成一項調查。一些完成調查的學生將被問到他們是否想分享關於他們學校經歷的簡短錄音。所有信息將被保密，在撰寫研究結果時學生不會被識別。

### 如果我選擇不參與，會發生什麼？

你的孩子的參與是自願的，不受影響，對你的孩子沒有負面影響。您與您孩子的老師或學校的關係不會受到您參與或不參與本研究的決定的影響。如果我的孩子參加，他/她可以隨時選擇退出研究而不受處罰。

### 研究何時舉行？

這項研究將在 2018 年 1 月 30 日至 3 月 4 日的藝術課上進行。

### 如果我有問題，我可以聯繫誰？

您可以通過 [EMandell@philasd.org](mailto:EMandell@philasd.org) 與我聯繫，或致電(215)965-8569 並提出任何問題或疑慮。

謝謝，

Ms. Erica Mandell  
藝術教師 麥考爾學校  
325 S. 7<sup>th</sup> St 費城 19106

如果您同意讓您的孩子參加，請在 2018 年 1 月 30 日之前分離並回到課堂教師處：

我，\_\_\_\_\_ 特此給予許可

我的孩子，\_\_\_\_\_ 參加了這項研究。

家長/監護人簽字

錄音是本研究的一部分。請檢查下列之一：

- ☐ 我同意讓我的孩子錄音。
- ☐ 我不同意我的孩子被錄音

**Moore College of Art and Design**  
Art Education Masters of Art in Art Education Program



**PARTICIPANTS RIGHTS FOR STUDENTS**

Principal Investigator: Erica Mandell

(Working) Research Title: Supporting Language Acquisition and Communication Skill Development in ELLs in the Urban Public School Art Classroom

- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.
- My child's participation in research is voluntary. I may refuse to have him or her participate or withdraw from participation at any time without putting his or her grade in jeopardy.
- The researcher may withdraw my child from the research at her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to allow my child to continue to participate, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research project that personally identifies my child will not be released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- If at any time I have questions regarding the research or my child's participation, I can contact the investigator who will answer my questions. The investigator's phone number is (215) 839-8046. You may also reach the investigator by email at [emandell@philasd.org](mailto:emandell@philasd.org)
- If at any time I have comments or concerns regarding the conduct of the research or questions about my child's rights as a research subject, I should contact the Art Education Graduate Program Coordinator at Moore College of Art and Design at (215) 965 8569.

## CHINESE VERSION: PARTICIPANTS RIGHTS FOR STUDENTS



參與權利的學生  
首席調查員: Erica Mandell

(工作) 研究課題：支持英語學習者在城市公立小學美術課上的語言習得和交流技巧

- 我有機會就這項研究的目的和程序提出問題
- 我的孩子參與研究是自願的。我可以隨時拒絕參加或者退出參與，但是不要讓他或她的成績處於危險之中
- 如果重要的新信息可能與我願意讓我的孩子繼續參與有關，調查員將提供這些信息
- 未經我的同意，我的孩子的信息將不會被透露
- 如果我在任何時候對研究或我的孩子的參與有任何疑問，我可以聯繫研究者，他將回答我的問題。調查員的電話號碼是（215）839-9046。您也可以通過電子郵件 [emandell@philasd.org](mailto:emandell@philasd.org) 聯繫調查員
- 如果我在任何時候對研究進行評論或擔憂，或者關於我的孩子權利作為研究主題的問題，我應該聯繫摩爾藝術與設計學院藝術教育研究生項目協調員（215）965 8569

## APPENDIX C

## ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

**Please be honest! This is an anonymous questionnaire that only will be seen by Ms. Mandell for research purposes. Do not write your name. You will not be graded on this questionnaire.**

School ID number: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle your homeroom number:      6A                      6B                      6C

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, please answer the following questions:

How would you rate your current interest level in Ms. Mandell's art class. Please be honest. Your responses will be recorded anonymously.

1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8          9          10

How would you rate your ability to communicate with other members of your class and community?

1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8          9          10

How would you rate your ability to understand and follow directions in Ms. Mandell's art class?

1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8          9          10

How would you rate your ability to communicate with other members of your class community in English?

1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8          9          10

Do you find that there is a language barrier keeping you from successfully communicating with classmates?

Never                      Sometimes                      Often                      Always

Do you find that you are more successful making art by yourself or in a group setting?

By myself                      In a group

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In your opinion, how do you learn best? (Ex: think pair share, whole class discussions, watching a video, independent projects, etc) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**TEACHING PROTOCOL**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

Who was working together?

What were students working on today?

Who did you give extra support to today?

Anecdotal notes or quotes from students:

**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS**

1. How long have you attended McCall School?
2. What language(s) are spoken by you/your family members at home?
3. What language do you feel most comfortable using in a school setting?
4. Where do you feel you can go for support for the language you speak at school?
5. What has your favorite part of art class been, so far, this year?
6. What would you say is the most effective way for you to understand a teacher's directions?
7. What kind of classroom activities do you feel most successful at (prompted examples: think-pair-share, watching a video, whole class discussions, independent projects, group work, centers)? Why?
8. Do you enjoy participating in group projects? Why or why not?

**OBSERVATION PROTOCOL**

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Day 1	1. Did this student support other students in their learning today? What did I observe?  2. How successful was this student in completing tasks/assignments?  3. Make note of specific language this student used today. Did they use overwhelmingly positive or negative language?	
Day 2	1. Did this student support other students in their learning today? What did I observe?  2. How successful was this student in completing tasks/assignments?  3. Make note of specific language this student used today. Did they use overwhelmingly positive or negative language?	
Day 3	1. Did this student support other students in their learning today? What did I observe?  2. How successful was this student in completing tasks/assignments?  3. Make note of specific language this student used today. Did they use overwhelmingly positive or negative language?	
Day 4	1. Did this student support other students in their learning today? What did I observe?  2. How successful was this student in completing tasks/assignments?  3. Make note of specific language this student used today. Did they use overwhelmingly positive or negative language?	
Day 5	1. Did this student support other students in their learning today? What did I observe?  2. How successful was this student in completing tasks/assignments?  3. Make note of specific language this student used today. Did they use overwhelmingly positive or negative language?	
Day 6	1. Did this student support other students in their learning today? What did I observe?  2. How successful was this student in completing tasks/assignments?  3. Make note of specific language this student used today. Did they use overwhelmingly positive or negative language?	
Day 7	1. Did this student support other students in their learning today? What did I observe?  2. How successful was this student in completing tasks/assignments?  3. Make note of specific language this student used today. Did they use overwhelmingly positive or negative language?	
Day 8	1. Did this student support other students in their learning today? What did I observe?  2. How successful was this student in completing tasks/assignments?  3. Make note of specific language this student used today. Did they use overwhelmingly positive or negative language?	

## APPENDIX D

## LESSON PLANS

These are expected lesson plans that may be altered or adapted due to student needs or circumstances out of my control.

	PDE/SDP Standard	Daily Lessons	Assessment	Resources
Class A	<p>9.1.5.A. Know and use the elements and principles of each art form to create works in the arts and humanities.</p> <p>9.1.5.B Recognize, know, use and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review and revise original works in the arts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily Lessons</li> <li>• Pre-Assessment Protocol, PPT on local artist Ed Bing Lee, and pop artists Claes Oldenburg, and Wayne Thiebaud. Quick sketches/brainstorming at tables of which food item they will create and how they will create it</li> <li>• Determine how your group will work together, finish sketches/brainstorming, begin acquiring materials and putting them together</li> <li>• Put materials together/Paiper Mache</li> <li>• Paiper Mache</li> <li>• Paiper Mache</li> <li>• Paint</li> <li>• Paint</li> <li>• Group critique, self-assessment</li> <li>• Post-Assessment protocol</li> </ul>	<p>Rubric</p> <p>Assessment Protocol</p> <p>Artist Statement</p> <p>Informal questioning, etc.</p>	<p>PPT and videos</p> <p>Newspaper, paper bags, tape, paiper mache mixture, paint</p>
Class B	<p>9.1.5.A. Know and use the elements and principles of each art form to create works in the arts and humanities.</p> <p>9.1.5.B Recognize, know, use and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-Assessment Protocol, Review expectations, choice-based sketchbook activity, choice based art making</li> <li>• Choice-based sketchbook activity, choice based art making</li> <li>• Choice-based sketchbook activity, choice based art making</li> <li>• Choice-based sketchbook activity, choice based art making</li> </ul>	<p>Rubric</p> <p>Assessment Protocol</p> <p>Artist Statement</p> <p>Informal questioning, etc.</p>	<p>PPTs, videos, demos, art making materials</p>



	review and revise original works in the arts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choice-based sketchbook activity, choice based art making</li> <li>Choice-based sketchbook activity, choice based art making</li> <li>Choice-based sketchbook activity, choice based art making</li> <li>Post-Assessment protocol, unit wrap-up</li> </ul>		
Class C	<p>9.1.5.A. Know and use the elements and principles of each art form to create works in the arts and humanities.</p> <p>9.1.5.B Recognize, know, use and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review and revise original works in the arts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-Assessment Protocol, choose teams, Watch stop motion video, begin to storyboard</li> <li>Watch stop motion video, storyboarding</li> <li>Build backgrounds</li> <li>Build backgrounds, paint backgrounds</li> <li>Paint backgrounds, build characters</li> <li>Finish building characters, learn how to take “video”</li> <li>Put videos together in iMovie</li> <li>Watch videos, Post-Assessment protocol</li> </ul>	<p>Rubric</p> <p>Assessment Protocol</p> <p>Artist Statement</p> <p>Informal questioning, etc.</p>	<p>Stop motion videos</p> <p>Packet</p> <p>Cardboard boxes, scissors, glue, paint, clay, found objects, iPads, chromebooks</p>

## APPENDIX E

## PHOTOS OF STUDENT WORK

Student work is shown in progress in addition to photographs of complete works and stills from complete stop motion animation films created by study participants.



*Figure 10.* Student A organizing and cutting yarn.



*Figure 11.* Student B working with clay in class B (choice-based) prior to switching classes.

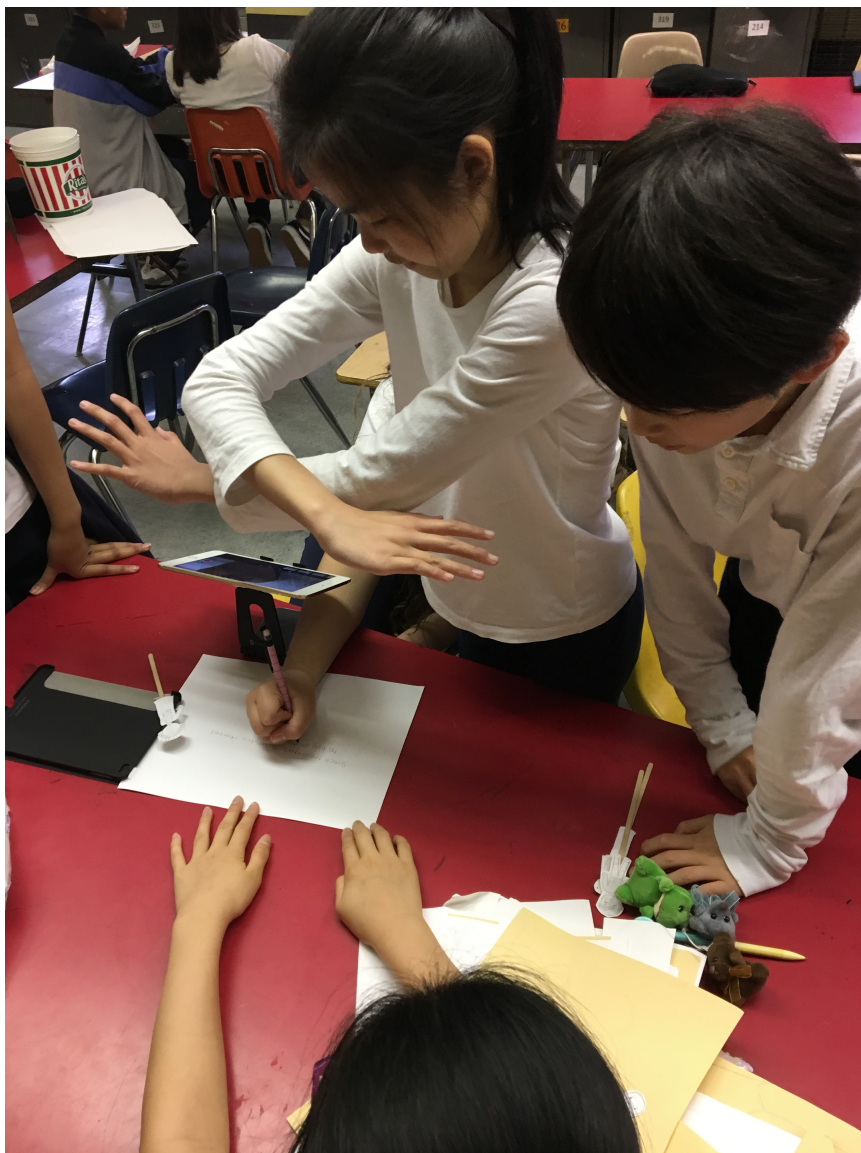




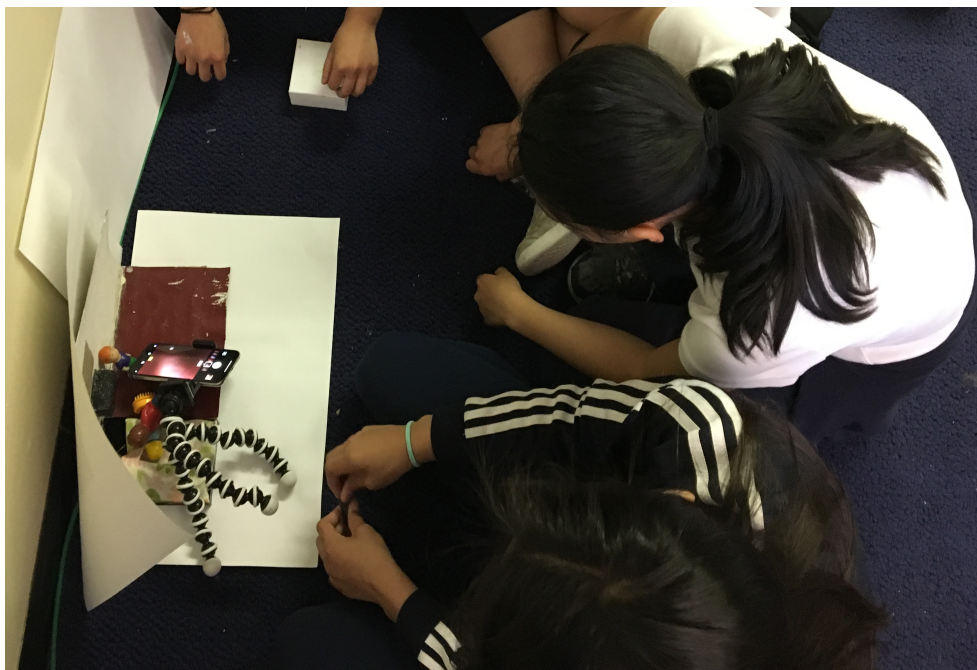
*Figure 12.* Student B working on a prop after being transferred to class C.







*Figure 14.* Student C blocks shadows during filming of stop motion video.



*Figure 15.* Student B works on filming stop motion animation film with classmates.



*Figure 16.* Close up details of completed sculptures created by student A and classmates.